



Greenleaf pride: Steve Vondracek, 92, talks at his home about Greenleaf residents' willingness to work

together in times of need. Vondracek moved to the Greenleaf area in 1919.

Spirit of Greenleaf stays alive

Brown Co. community 'sticks together' in times of need

By Gary Dodge

Press-Gazette

GREENLEAF — Everybody knows everyone's business in Greenleaf.

"They know you, and what they don't know they guess. How can you go wrong?" says Harry Laack, while getting a haircut at John Schmitt's Barber Shop.

"But there's never a fight on the street corner," says Laack, 78, a former Greenleaf cheese

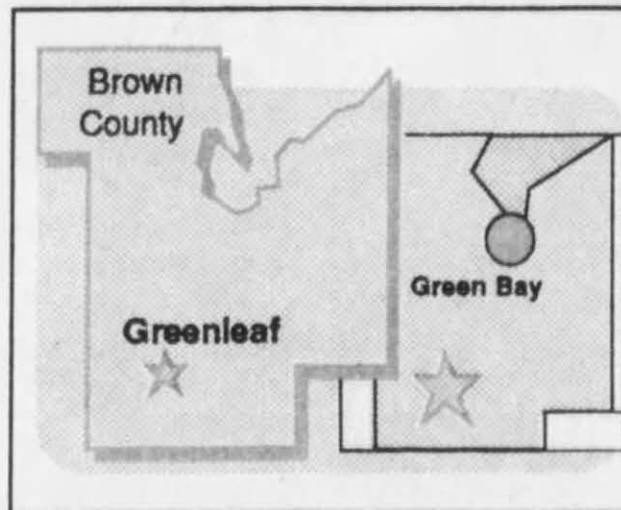
**Press-Gazette photos
by Sandee Gerbers**

factory and grocery store owner.

"They will add and they will talk about you. Of course, half the lies they say are never true, so don't take offense," he says.

But in a time of need, residents in this southern Brown County community help.

"They're very independent and they (complain) all day but if somebody needs a hand they're all there. Everyone.



They'll come on crutches," Laack says.

Laack says he came to the community from Calumet County in 1941 because six churches were in the Greenleaf area — evidence that decent people live here.

Steve Vondracek, 92, says a sleet storm in 1922 that caused heavy damage serves as an example of the community's spirit.

People assisted each other in cleanup efforts.

The Greenleaf file

□ **Population:** 350 to 400, U.S. Postal Service estimate, Greenleaf office.

□ **Fire department:** 35 volunteers.

□ **Churches:** St. Mary Catholic Church and St. Paul Lutheran Church.

□ **Main highways:** State highways 57 and 96.

Vondracek, who moved to the Greenleaf area from Reedsville in 1919, says three blacksmith shops and a grocery and hardware store operated then. The Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul Railroad brought freight and passengers to the community.

People today gather at the local restaurant, go to the barber shop or patronize

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Burger time: Vicki Bungeon prepares hamburgers at the D&G Truck Stop, Greenleaf.



Personal touch: Connie Diny talks with a visitor at her

store, Diny's Food, in Greenleaf.

Greenleaf

local businesses. Children usually find their own fun, including walking around town, residents say.

The D&G Truck Stop also gets plenty of travelers, says cook Vicki Bungeon, 29.

"The guys come in early in the morning and talk," Bungeon says.

Schmitt, 63, whose father Frank opened the barber shop in 1908, says he stays in the community because of strong ties to family and church.

"The only time I left here was when I was in the service twice," Schmitt says. "We always did good business."

One man is a fifth-generation customer.

Customers come to the barber shop because of its reputation, Laack says.

"When you give him a \$5 bill, he gives you a \$2 bill back," Laack says. When someone spends the \$2

bill, clerks always know the person was at the barber shop.

Milton Cornette's family business organizes activities for customers such as bus trips to Milwaukee Brewers baseball games.

"I think the community itself sticks together and works very well together," says Cornette, 54, whose family business, Cornette Farm Supply, is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

"I guess that's what makes a small community click. I think people are closer in small communities," he says.

Area residents show loyalty to Diny's Food, a place where clerks are told it's part of their job to talk to customers who shop there.

"A lot of older people come in to visit," says Connie Diny, 38, who owns the store with her husband Bill.

"You don't get that at any other place," she says.

■ **Next week:** Lena in Oconto County